

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 FEAE-00 EB-11 ACDA-19 SAM-01

OMB-01 AF-10 DRC-01 SAJ-01 /154 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0230

INFO AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

CINCLANT

COMUSFORAZ

DIA

USCINCEUR

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3398

USUN FOR AMB SCOTT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PO, US, MARR

SUBJ: SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER ON LAJES BASE

NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A) LISBON 3319; B) LISBON 3363; C) MADRID 3194

1. DR. FRANCISCO RAMOS DA COSTA, SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER
IN CHARGE OF PARTY'S INTERNATIONAL SECTION, TOLD EMBOFF
FOLLOWING IN AUGUST 9 MEETING ARRANGED WITH HIM AT
EMBOFF'S REQUEST.

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2. DA COSTA WAS ASKED IF ANY TRUTH TO RUMOR OF ARAB OFFER TO GOP OF DOLS 400 MILLION AND END TO OIL EMBARGO IN RETURN FOR NON-RENEWAL OF AZORES BASE RIGHTS (REF B). DA COSTA RELUCTANTLY CONFIRMED OFFER, BUT VOLUNTEERED NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON IT. HE STRESSED HOWEVER THAT PORTUGAL DID NOT SOLICIT THIS OFFER AND SAID GOP OF COURSE DOES NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT OFFERS MADE TO IT. AT THIS POINT IN CONVERSATION DA COSTA REMARKED THAT HE HOPED NO NEWS STORY REGARDING OFFER WOULD APPEAR IN PRESS, AS THIS WOULD "COMPLICATE THINGS FOR THE GOVERNMENT," WHICH WANTS TO REACH BASE AGREEMENT WITH USG. (COMMENT: LOCAL PRESS HAS NOT PICKED UP STORY.)

3. WHEN QUESTIONED REGARDING THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S STANCE VIS-A-VIS RENEWAL OF THE AZORES BASE AGREEMENT, DA COSTA REPLIED " I CAN GUARANTEE THAT NEITHER WITHIN OR OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT WILL THE SOCIALISTS CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THE US OVER THE AZORES." THE PARTY'S POLITICAL COMMITTEE HAS ALREADY MET, HE SAID, AND HAS AGREED TO SUPPORT A RENEWAL OF THE BASE AGREEMENT. WHAT ABOUT THAT PART OF SOCIALIST PARTY PROGRAM WHICH CALLS FOR AN END TO FOREIGN BASES ON PORTUGUESE SOIL? DA COSTA SAID THIS IS "LONGRUN POSITION OF PARTY, NOT SHORT-RUN" AND ANYWAY BASE RENEWAL WOULD BRING NEEDED ECONOMIC AID FOR THE COUNTRY (REF C). IN SHORT "WE (SOCIALISTS) ARE VERY FLEXIBLE ON AZORES QUESTION."

4. DA COSTA ALSO PREDICTED THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD NOT MAKE A POLITICAL ISSUE OUT OF THE AZORES BASE AT LEAST FOR NOW. "BREZNEV WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US, AND DOESN'T WANT ALVARO CUNHAL TO CAUSE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION." DA COSTA REPEATED WHAT HE SAID TO EMBOFF DURING EARLIER VISIT, NAMELY THAT CUNHAL HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTION FROM BREZNEV FOR THE PCP NOT TO CRITICIZE THE US PUBLICLY.

5. COMMENT: TO EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE NEITHER COMMUNISTS NOR SOCIALISTS HAVE CRITICIZED THE UNITED STATES IN ANY OF THEIR PUBLIC RALLIES, OR IN ANY OF THEIR COMMUNIQUE TO THE PRESS. FURTHERHMORE NEITHER PARTY HAS SHOWN ANY DESIRE TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF THE AZORES RENEGOTIATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PROBABLY FOR THE REASONS CITED BY RAMOS DA COSTA.

6. LOCAL PRESS HAS TREATED RE-OPENING OF LAJES BASE TALKS AS A "NON-EVENT." EXCEPT FOR THE EXPRESSO ARTICLE ON AUGUST 3 (REF A), LISBON NEWSPAPERS HAVE REFRAINED FROM ANY COMMENT ON OR CRITICISM OF RE-NEGOTIATIONS, OR OF DESIRABILITY OF US MILITARY PRESENCE ON PORTUGUESE SOIL. THIS UNUSUAL LACK OF ADVERSE REACTION

MAY REFLECT INSTRUCTIONS BY GOP TO NEWSPAPERS TO LOW
KEY AZORES, AS WELL AS SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST WARNINGS
TO THEIR JOURNALISTS NOT TO BROACH THE SUBJECT.
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